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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 539 - APRIL 10, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. ALTHOUGH THE GRADUAL BUILDUP OF UN PEACEKEEPING TROOPS IN SOUTH LEBANON CONTINUES AND THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS REITERATED ITS WILLINGNESS TO DEPART, THE ISRAELIS ARE NOT HAPPY WITH SECURITY CONDITIONS AND MAY DELAY A FINAL WITHDRAWAL. UNTIL THEY DO WITHDRAW, EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE WILLING TO CONSIDER ANY REVIVAL OF THE DEADLOCKED EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE TALKS.

2. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT BEGAN SENDING A FEW GENDARMES TO ASSIST UN PEACEKEEPERS IN SOUTH LEBANON LAST WEEK, BUT IS STILL RELUCTANT TO COMMIT REGULAR UNITS OF ITS FLEDGLING NEW ARMY. PRESIDENT SARKIS IS CONCERNED THAT THE HEAVILY ARMED PALESTINIANS NOW CONCENTRATED NORTH OF THE LITANI RIVER AND IN TYRE MIGHT YET PROVOKE ANOTHER ISRAELI COUNTER-STRIKE THAT WOULD CATCH THE RECENTLY RECONSTITUTED LEBANESE UNITS IN THE MIDDLE. THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT IS ALSO MINDFUL THAT THE TROUBLE IN THE SOUTH COULD SPARK A NEW ROUND OF SECTARIAN VIOLENCE FARTHER NORTH AND IT WANTS TO KEEP NEAR AT HAND WHATEVER RELIABLE UNITS IT COMMANDS.

3. FOR NOW, MOST PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN GROUPS SEEM WILLING TO OBSERVE THE CEASE-FIRE. IN GENERAL, THE LEVEL OF INCIDENTS IS DOWN, ALTHOUGH SPORADIC ROCKET AND ARTILLERY
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FIRE BY REJECTIONIST UNITS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE.

4. THE UN FORCE IS CONTINUING ITS DEPLOYMENT ALONG THE LITANI RIVER DIVIDING LINE. ALTHOUGH THE ISRAELIS HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WILL PROCEED WITH A THINNING OUT OF THEIR TROOPS IN SOUTH LEBANON, THEY HAVE NOT PROVIDED A TIMETABLE. THEY WILL BE EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO PULL OUT COMPLETELY UNTIL THEY ARE MORE CONFIDENT THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL NOT RETURN IN FORCE.

5. THE AREA AROUND TYRE CONTINUES TO POSE SPECIAL PROBLEMS. THE SHOOTING INCIDENT INVOLVING A DIRECT CLASH BETWEEN PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI FORCES SOUTH OF THAT CITY ON APRIL 5 WHEN AN ISRAELI VEHICLE STRAYED INTO A PALESTINIAN-CONTROLLED AREA HAS BEEN DESCRIBED BY THE IDF AS AN AMBUSH. THE ISRAELIS ARE DETERMINED THAT PALESTINIAN ACTIVITIES AROUND THERE MUST BE CONTROLLED, AND THEY WANT THE UN FORCES TO TAKE THE LITANI RIVER BRIDGE NORTH OF THE CITY, WHICH THE PALESTINIANS STILL HOLD. THE FRENCH UN CONTINGENT, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO FORCE THE ISSUE WITH THE PALESTINIANS. (SECRET)

6. ISRAEL. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT THE COUNTER-CAMPAIGN TO THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT IS BEGINNING TO TAKE SHAPE. AT LEAST TO SOME EXTENT "SECURE PEACE," AS THE NEW EFFORT IS LIKELY TO BE CALLED, IS THE HANDIWORK OF HERUT. AWARE OF THE RISKS IN A COUNTER-CAMPAIGN, THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD WAS PRECEDED BY CONSIDERABLE SOUL-SEARCHING AMONG HERUT LEADERS. ACCORDING TO THE EMBASSY, THE COMPETING CAMPAIGNS MAY WELL ENGENDER POLARIZATION AMONG THE PUBLIC ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND STIMULATE A NATIONAL DEBATE WHICH HAS THUS FAR FAILED TO GET OFF THE GROUND. IN ANY EVENT, THE IMAGE OF A FOREIGN POLICY CONSENSUS HAS ALREADY BEEN UNDERMINED. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

7. EGYPT. EMBASSY CAIRO HAS BEEN RECEIVING INCREASING
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INDICATIONS THAT THE SALIM CABINET IS IN DISARRAY AND THAT ANOTHER CABINET CHANGE--THIS TIME INCLUDING SALIM HIMSELF--MAY OCCUR BEFORE LONG. THE GOVERNMENT, MEANING MAINLY THE CABINET, IS BEING CRITICIZED AS INEFFECTUAL, AND SALIM IS UNDER FIRE FROM HIS COLLEAGUES FOR FAILING TO MAINTAIN SUFFICIENT DISCIPLINE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S MISR PARTY. ALL OF THIS IS TAKING PLACE AGAINST THE BACK-DROP OF INFLATIONARY PRICE RISES AND SERIOUS COMMODITY

SHORTAGES, WHICH SADAT AND OTHER GOVERNMENT LEADERS INCREASINGLY FEAR COULD LEAD TO A REPETITION OF THE JANUARY 1977 FOOD PRICE RIOTS. AS THE EMBASSY COMMENTED, THE SOCIAL TINDER IS DRY AND THUS IT WOULD NOT TAKE MUCH TO SPARK NEW RIOTS.

8. THE EMBASSY ALSO NOTES THAT AL AHRAH ON APRIL 3 REPORTED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE APPROVED AN INCREASE IN EXPORTS TO EGYPT IN 1978. THE EMBASSY COMMENTS THAT EAST BLOC DIPLOMATS INTERPRET THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESS REPORT DIFFERENTLY. THE HUNGARIANS CONSIDER THAT INCREASED TRADE MIGHT SIGNAL THAT MOSCOW-CAIRO RELATIONS ARE WARMING, WHEREAS A POLISH DIPLOMAT VIEWS IT AS STRICTLY BUSINESS. (SECRET)

9. JORDAN. A CLOSE ADVISOR OF THE KING TOLD EMBASSY AMMAN ON APRIL 6 THAT JORDAN IS CONCERNED BY THE DRIFT AND DISUNITY IN THE ARAB WORLD WHICH IS ALLOWING THE PLO AND RADICALS TO TAKE THE POLITICAL LEAD. AMMAN FEARS A RADICAL SHIFT TOWARD WAR IF THE MODERATES DO NOT REASSERT THEIR VIEWS. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT A CALL FOR AN ARAB SUMMIT IS PREMATURE, JORDAN IS SEEKING THROUGH THE FORMULATION OF A SPECIFIC SUMMIT AGENDA TO BRING THE ARABS, PARTICULARLY THE MODERATES, TOGETHER ON AS MANY POINTS OF
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COMMON AGREEMENT AS POSSIBLE AGAINST THE RADICALS IN ORDER TO BUILD BACKFIRES AGAINST THEM. SUCH A STRATEGY IS A MEANS OF FENDING OFF ARAB PRESSURES AND OF CONSTRUCTING A RATIONALE FOR ALLOWING JORDAN TO AVOID FUTURE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFRONTATIONS IF ITS IDEAS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.
(SECRET)

10. SYRIA. A SERIES OF ASSASSINATIONS OF PROMINENT ALAWITES IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAS AROUSED SYRIA'S ALAWITE COMMUNITY AND SHAKEN THE ASSAD REGIME. WHILE ASSAD CONFRONTS NO IMMINENT THREAT TO HIS TENURE, THE REMOVAL OF AIR FORCE COMMANDER NAJI JAMIL SIGNALLED THE ESCALATING PRICE THAT THE PRESIDENT MUST PAY TO CONTAIN SECTARIAN RIVALRIES. FURTHERMORE, WITH ASSAD'S POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES NOW OUT IN THE OPEN, THE JORDANIANS, THE PLO, LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF PERCEIVED INSTABILITY WITHIN SYRIA.

11. THE DILEMMA FACING ASSAD IS THAT THE MEASURES HE DECREES TO UNCOVER THE ASSASSINS WILL PROBABLY FURTHER EXACERBATE ALAWITE-SUNNI SECTARIAN TENSIONS IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. ACCORDINGLY, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE HAS BY NO MEANS ENDED. OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE IN DAMASCUS REPORTED THAT ON APRIL 1 THE AIRCRAFT OF THE

NEWLY-DESIGNATED DEPUTY AIR FORCE COMMANDER WAS SABOTAGED. ALAWITE BRIGADIER HASSAN WAS INJURED, AND MAY BE UNABLE TO RETAIN HIS NEW PORTFOLIO. THE ATTACHE NOTED THAT, DESPITE THE NOTABLE INCREASE IN SECURITY MEASURES, ALAWITES REMAIN PESSIMISTIC THAT ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS WILL CONTINUE.

12. BY RESORTING TO VIOLENCE, ASSAD'S SUNNI OPPONENTS THUS HAVE ACQUIRED SOME LEVERAGE TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE REGIME. THEY APPEAR DETERMINED TO CREATE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS THAT WILL LEAD TO THE DEMISE OF ALAWITE

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POLITICAL DOMINATION OF SYRIA. IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ASSAD'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM ANNOUNCED LAST MONTH WILL APPEAL TO THEM. FURTHERMORE, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT ASSAD IS CONTEMPLATING THE KIND OF FAR-REACHING POWER-SHARING MEASURES THAT MIGHT HOLD SOME ATTRACTION FOR SUNNIS SYMPATHETIC TO THE DISSENTS. INSTEAD, THE SYRIAN LEADER HAS DECIDED TO CON-

CENTRATE EVEN MORE AUTHORITY IN THE HANDS OF A FEW,
PREDOMINATLY ALAWITE KEY LIEUTENANTS. (SECRET) VANCE

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